



**my heart burns
there too**

richietosier (forestjoshua)

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Category: IT (2017), IT - Stephen King

Genre: Angst, Book Spoilers, Canon Compliant, Canonical Character Death, F/M, Future Fic, Gen, Implied/Referenced Character Death, M/M, benverly with kids, married benverly, reddie implied

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon (mentioned), Patricia Uris, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris

Relationships: Ben Hanscom/Beverly Marsh, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier (Implied)

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-09-30

Updated: 2017-09-30

Packaged: 2020-01-21 22:41:49

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 5,150

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

After the Losers' Club defeated It for the final time, Beverly finally got to start the life she always wanted with a man she loved and who truly loved her. Even though she didn't remember the circumstances they'd met in.

Because when It was gone, so were the Losers' memories of each other. But they'd always find their way back to each other.

Right?

my heart burns there too

Author's Note:

just something i had to get out of my mind

my tumblr: [richietosier](#)

Beverly Hanscom doesn't remember how she met her husband.

It's the truth – how weird it may sound. At one point, Ben had just been there. Beverly always felt like she had known Ben forever, and maybe she had, but the first proper memory she had of Ben was their beautiful shotgun wedding. The only things Beverly had as memories from her wedding were the marriage certificate, her husband, the (now dry) pink roses Ben had given her as a wedding bouquet, and a postcard from someone named Mike Hanlon who congratulated them for their nuptials.

(Beverly didn't know who Mike Hanlon was but Ben was almost sure he was one of his old friends from school.)

Ben wasn't Beverly's first husband. She had been married to a dickbag named Tom, but she was pretty sure Tom was dead now. She didn't know how, she didn't want to know. As long as Tom wasn't ever going to abuse her again.

It scared Beverly that she had more memories of Tom than Ben. She often looked at her handsome husband, and tried to *think*. Where did she meet him? Were they childhood friends? High school sweethearts? Did they perhaps meet in a coffeeshop, or on the subway? Did Ben notice her first, or she him?

Truth be told, it didn't really matter. As long as Ben was there. He was the best man Beverly had ever known – sweet and kind and intelligent, and she loved him very much. Who cared she didn't remember how they met? Besides, no one would ever know. Beverly always made up a lie when someone asked – usually that they had met in a library, reaching for the same novel. (By William Denbrough. In Beverly's story, it was always William Denbrough's

novel.) It was a cute story, and that was enough for most people.

(Ben didn't remember either. Beverly had never had the courage to ask, but she knew. She noticed whenever someone asked how they'd met how shift and nervous Ben turned. Maybe Ben believed Beverly's story. During the years, Beverly had made it believable enough.)

They had been married barely two months, when Beverly noticed she was pregnant. She was so overjoyed she couldn't wait for Ben to come home so she drove to his office to give him the news. The left immediately to celebrate.

(Beverly had never wanted children with Tom. She would have of course loved her children, whoever fathered them, but she had been terrified of what Tom would do to the child.)

They were having a boy. Beverly remembered Ben clutching the sonogram picture, affectionate look in his eyes. They agreed on everything – the colors of the baby's room, what kind of stroller they'd get, how they'd raise him... The only thing they *couldn't* agree on was the baby's name – Beverly wanted to name him Stanley, and Ben Edward.

And when Beverly went into labor – they still hadn't decided on a name. The cab ride to the hospital was pure agony for Beverly – the pain was manageable, but Ben irritated her by bringing up the name topic and even asking the driver which sounded better – Stanley Edward or Edward Stanley.

In the end, they didn't have to pick just one of the names since Beverly gave birth a surprise set of twins – they name the older one Edward and the younger one Stanley.

(No middle names. They had fought about names enough.)

Beverly thought she couldn't love anyone more than she loved Ben, but when she had both her sons in her arms, safe, and sleeping peacefully, she knew they were her sun and stars.

Even though the boys were twins, they didn't look similar, differences appearing more and more as they grew. Stanley took after Beverly –

he had her eyes, her nose, her lips. Even the freckles on his nose looked identical to Beverly's and his hair was the same flaming red ("winter fire", as Ben said) as his mother's. But Stanny had the same chubby cheeks that could be seen in Ben's childhood pictures. He was as caring as his father, and shy.

Edward – he was a firecracker, always running off somewhere. He was so quick Beverly worried he'd run to the street and get hit by a car before Beverly could stop him. Eds was a whole inch shorter than Stanny – a skinny boy with slim shoulders. He looked so much like Ben Beverly knew this boy would be heartbreaker some day.

Although Beverly considered herself brave, fear was constant in her life – fear for her boys especially. Every week, she woke up from a nightmare where her sons were chased by evil clowns, mummies and werewolves. She saw her boys trapped in a room full of blood. She saw Stanny drowning in a bathtub, and someone ripping off Eds's limbs.

She was terrified, but they were just dreams. Dreams that tortured her almost every night, but her boys were safe – she always checked, she had to see them sleeping peacefully in their beds before she could go back to sleep.

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When the boys are five, they have to move to Los Angeles because of Ben's job. They are a wealthy family, Ben being a successful architect and Beverly even more successful fashion designer. Moving suits Beverly more than fine, she's now closer to potential customers right on the edge of Hollywood. The boys hadn't gotten attached to their friends yet, so moving is easy for them as well.

They've been living in LA for two months when Beverly takes her sons out for ice cream. It's summer – a hot one, and the park is noisy and packed and as they are walking towards the ice cream booth Beverly realizes she's forgotten her purse at home.

“Mommy, how could you be so stupid!” Stanley groans, stomping his foot.

“I want ice cream!” Edward screams, jumping up and down.

“I’m sorry, darlings,” Beverly says, running her fingers through Eds’s hair, “We’ll just have to walk back home to get some money.”

“I’ll buy your sons some ice cream,” comes an eerily familiar voice behind them. Beverly and the boys turn in unison, and a wave of familiarity washes over Beverly. The man may not look as familiar as he had *sounded*. He’s tall and skinny, *too skinny*, Beverly notes. He has messy dark curls, hair greying slightly at his temples. A few days old stubble resides on his face and his eyes are sparkling slightly. He seems to be the same age as Beverly, but she can’t be sure.

Beverly is dumbfounded, but then the man offers his hand and Beverly has to take it.

“Richie Tozier, at your service,” he says, smiling, but there’s glassy sadness in his eyes.

“B- Beverly Hanscom,” says Beverly, squeezing the man’s fingers. The man turns to look at Eds and Stanny, who are eyeing the adults shyly.

“And who are these gentlemen?” asks Richie, but the boys just turn their heads towards the ground. Beverly sighs.

“Boys... Can you introduce yourselves to Mr. Tozier?” *Richie Tozier*. The name rings around Beverly’s head, as if it should mean something.

“I’m Edward,” says Eds bravely, showing his brother good example.

“I’m Stanley,” mumbles Stanley.

“Hello, Edward and Stanley Hanscom,” Richie says, “What kind of ice cream do you like?”

At that, the boys start to scream out their favorite flavors. Beverly looks at them fondly – they’re all flailing limbs and excited eyes.

Richie comes to sit next to Beverly on a bench as the boys run off with their ice cream.

“How old are they?” asks Richie after a moment of silence. Though they are strangers, Beverly doesn’t find Richie’s company uncomfortable. It’s like he’s some old friend she’s met up with after years and years of silence.

“Five,” Beverly says. Eds is currently freaking out because Stanny took a lick of his ice cream. Beverly smiles at them.

“Both?”

“They’re twins.”

“They don’t look like twins,” Richie points out. They don’t, with their different hair colors and Eds being smaller than Stanny.

“They were surprise twins. My husband and I didn’t know we were having two of them until I gave birth to them.”

“Really?” Richie laughs. “That happens?”

“Happened to me.”

“Are you planning on having more?”

Beverly plays with the hem of her skirt. Her gaze trails up to the boys, who are feeding their ice cream cones to ducks. “No,” Beverly says, “These two boys are a blessing enough, and a lot of work. Besides, I’m already forty-five.”

“Really? Me too,” says Richie.

“Do you have children?”

“No.”

“Are you married?”

Richie caresses his empty ring finger. His eyes are somewhere far away. “No,” he chokes on the word. Beverly wonders what’s his

story, but it isn't her place to ask.

There's something she'd like to clear out, though. So she asks,

"Do I know you from somewhere?"

Richie chuckles. "Well, I'm a radio DJ," he says.

"Okay," Beverly breathes. That explains why his voice was so familiar.

But that's not it, is it? a voice in the back of Beverly's head suggests. Everything about him is distantly familiar to you. Not just his voice – everything.

Beverly brushes off the thoughts. She glances at her wristwatch. Ben will be home from work in twenty minutes.

"We need to go," Beverly sighs. He turns to smile warmly at Richie, and Richie smiles back. "Thank you so much for the ice cream."

"No problem," says Richie.

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The encounter with Richie Tozier starts to *haunt* Beverly. She starts to listen to his radio shows, becoming almost obsessed, mentally kicking herself if she misses one. She thinks Richie may be the funniest person she knows. No matter how bad her day is he always manages make her laugh – even the kids love him, and Ben constantly teases Beverly about her supposed "crush" on Richie.

"It's not a crush," Beverly insists one evening, "More of a... pull towards him. I can't stop listening to him, or thinking about how he is or what's he doing?"

"Sounds like a crush to me," Ben says, raising his eyebrow.

“No, Ben. Listening to him just makes me feel secure.”

“I know, Bev, dear. Me too.”

That night Beverly has another nightmare. She’s chasing Edward – he’s running, running, running, and Beverly has never seen her son run that fast, and she’s scared she’ll lost him. That Eds runs straight into some danger.

“Eds! *Edward!*” Beverly, as her son gets farther and father away from, until he disappears, and Beverly is left alone in the dark.

“*Eds,*” she sobs. She cannot lose her son, she *cannot*.

And then, she sees *light*. Certain hope fills her chest, the feeling that *if* she follows the light, she’ll find her son, she’ll find Edward, and so she follows the light until all the black surrounding turns white.

She still doesn’t see Edward anywhere.

“Eds?” she whispers hopefully. *He’s hiding*, Beverly decides. *Edward is just hiding, and he’ll appear soon. She hasn’t lost him.*

“Bev?” a gentle voice calls Beverly, and slowly she turns around to see a figure of a man surrounded by light.

“Who are you? Where is my son?” Beverly asks, tears streaming down her face.

Slowly, the man steps closer and just then Beverly notices the small boy he’s holding.

Eds. Edward, her son.

“Calm down, Bevvie. Edward fell asleep,” the man says. He has a pleasant voice that automatically soothes Beverly. Little Eds is holding onto the man’s neck, breathing softly. The man smiles at the boy, then turns to look at Beverly. He must be around forty, but he’s very small, one of the smallest grown men Beverly has seen. The man’s brown hair looks incredibly soft, and his eyes are very gentle and tired.

Any mother would be nervous seeing a strange man holding her son, but Beverly isn't. She *trusts* this man, as if he were her friend. She doesn't know him, but feels a pull toward him, like she does to Richie Tozier.

The man hands Eds to Beverly, who feels at peace now that she's holding her son, now that she's in the company of this man.

"Thank you, Eddie," Beverly whispers and tears escape her eyes again.

She wakes up with a gasp, the man's face fading from her mind, his name disappearing from her lips.

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One afternoon, Beverly is running errands alone with Stanny, who is a momma's boy, always following Beverly around whereas Eds *adores* Ben. Ben has taken Edward to the doctor's, they suspect the boy has asthma since he has started to have troubles with breathing, especially if he has run around a lot. Beverly worries for her son. She vaguely remembers she used to have friend with asthma when she was a kid, and was constantly worried for his health.

Beverly enters a grocery store, Stanny hanging off her arm. She glances at her wristwatch, glad to notice that she still has hours to go before Richie comes over for a visit. At one point, Beverly had just snapped and she had *had to* get in contact with the man. Richie had been more than happy to befriend Beverly – over months he had grown close with Ben too, and often babysat their children.

"Mommy, can I get ice cream?" Stanny whines, not letting go of Beverly's arm as she picks up a shopping basket.

"No, honey, not today," Beverly answers absentmindedly.

"But Mom! Eds said Daddy promised to buy him some!"

“Yes, honey, but Eds had to go to the doctor’s.”

“I want to go to the doctor’s, then,” Stanley whines and pouts.

Beverly has to laugh. “Sweetheart, but there’s nothing wrong with you!”

“Is there something wrong with Eds?”

“I don’t know, Stanny,” Beverly mutters, as he tries to search for the cereal brand Ben has recently grown so fond of.

When she finally finds the right package, she realizes that Stanley has become quiet.

(Too quiet.)

“Stanley?” Beverly calls, glancing around frantically. She sees no one, and her heart starts to hammer. This is how her nightmares start.

“Stanley? Stanny!” Beverly shouts, growing more anxious with every second. She walks over to end of the aisle, forgetting her basket on the floor. She glances left and right, but doesn’t see her son’s red head.

But then, she hears Stanley shriek, “Mommy!” and quickly, Beverly turns around on her heels, crouching down to catch her son in her arms.

“You scared me, Stanley...” Beverly whispers against her son’s curls. She lifts her tearful gaze, and sees a woman eyeing them curiously.

Beverly swallows her tears. “Did you... Did you help my son?” she asks the woman, and the woman nods. “I-“ Beverly sniffles. Searching for Stanny in the grocery store was almost worse than chasing Eds in the dream – because this was real. “He just ran away from me before I could do anything.” She runs her fingers one more time through Stanny’s hair, then stands up. Stanley clings to her leg.

“Don’t worry.” The woman smiles sadly. She’s so pretty, and so sad. “Kids tend to do that.”

Stanny whimpers, and holds on to Beverly even more fiercely as Beverly tries to approach the woman.

“Do you have children?” she asks. The corners of the woman’s mouth twitch downward.

“No,” she says hoarsely, “My husband and I never got any.” She plays with her wedding ring, shoulders tense.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” Beverly says. She couldn’t imagine life without Eds and Stanny. “Have you tried adopting?” she says after a pause, feeling a bit awkward for suggesting that to a stranger.

“He’s dead,” the woman says quietly, “My husband is dead.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” Beverly says. After a moment of hesitation, she offers her hand, “I’m Beverly Hanscom.”

“Patricia Uris,” the woman says. She glances at Stanley, who’s now looking shyly at her behind Beverly’s legs. “My husband’s name was also Stanley. He died five years ago. After that – I had to move. I just couldn’t live in Atlanta, not anymore, not without him.”

Beverly feels genuinely bad for this woman. “Would you like to grab coffee with me?” she has to ask. Does she have any friends? Does she have *anyone* to talk to?

Has she been all alone, for five years, as Beverly has thrived and raised two beautiful sons in a happy marriage?

Timidly, Patricia Uris nods.

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Patricia Uris is a lonely person.

Beverly learns that straight away when she befriends her, but she’s so *much more* than just a lonely woman who has lost her husband in a

tragic way.

(He had killed himself, slashed his wrists in a bathtub and just imagining that makes Beverly's stomach churn.)

Beverly and Patricia start a book club. Patricia refuses to read anything William Denbrough has written.

“Stanley used to be obsessed with him,” she says as she runs her fingers across the spines of the Denbrough books on Beverly and Ben’s shelf. They own them all.

Patricia also becomes an assistant of sorts to Beverly. She finds out Patty has an amazing fashion sense, and a mind full of beautiful ideas. So she hires her, and Patty becomes a constant figure in the Hanscom household.

Patricia Uris a lonely person, but there’s someone even lonelier than her.

When Richie Tozier appears on their doorstep at midnight, so drunk that he’s swaying, eyes glazed, Beverly can’t help but feel sad for him.

She’s suspected it a long time – that Richie Tozier isn’t exactly happy, hasn’t been for a long time. There’s a certain dullness always present in his eyes. Sure, he may seem cheerful, never shutting up, constantly telling jokes, but Beverly *knows* he’s just covering up something.

Something inside him is broken, and it breaks Beverly as well.

“Richie...” Beverly sighs, “The kids are asleep.”

(The kids adore Richie.)

“Bevvie!” Richie slurs, spreading his arms, “Bevvie, do you have time for your best friend Richie?”

Beverly always has time for Richie. So she sighs, and lets him in, watching as Richie stumbles over the threshold, almost falling but maintaining his balance in the last second.

"If you wake the kids up, I'll kill you," Beverly whispers, "Eds was in such a sugar rush, it was an impossibility to get him to calm down, and if Eds isn't sleeping, neither is Stanley."

"I love your kids," Richie mumbles and falls down on the couch. It makes such a loud sound that Beverly has to turn around to see if Ben or the boys have come to see what's happening.

"Bev, I don't feel so well," Richie groans. He has his arm draped over his eyes, and he sounds miserable.

"Stay there, Rich," Beverly says and tiptoes over to the boys' room to pick up blanket. She's relieved to find both of them fast asleep. Beverly leans over Eds and carefully removes the boy's thumb from his mouth, before kissing him gently on the forehead.

When she returns to the living room, she finds Richie asleep as well, accompanied by Ben.

"When did he show up?" Ben asks. He's frowning down at Richie, face full of worry.

"Five minutes ago," Beverly says.

"He was calling me 'haystack'. Why would he do that?"

"What do you mean? What did he say?"

"He said, 'You got the girl in the end, Haystack.' Then he passed out," Ben explains.

"Maybe he was referencing something," Beverly suggests. She goes to cover Richie with the blanket, then walks over to Ben, and gives him a kiss. Ben looks at Beverly, with so much love in his eyes it's making Beverly's knees weak. He twirls a strand of Beverly's red hair, still not touched by grey, between his thumb and forefinger.

"Let's go to bed, sweetheart," Ben says, "You have a fashion show to attend tomorrow, remember?"

Beverly hums, and leans on Ben, feeling his steady heartbeat against her chest. "Do you think Richie will still be hungover in the

evening?”

“Bev, honey, it’s better we get someone else to watch the kids this time.”

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Beverly is sitting on grass, on a summer day, wind playing with her scarlet curls. Her knees are scraped, and she realizes she’s a young girl again, thirteen, and life has just started to fuck her over.

This is a dream, she realizes, and she’s not alone.

A boy is sitting opposite her, and there’s a book in his lap. His reciting names of birds, which almost turn into poetry in Beverly’s head.

She looks at the boy in awe, takes in his curly hair and delicate face.

“Stanley?” she whispers, and the boy stops naming the birds, lifts his head-

And suddenly, he isn’t a boy anymore and Beverly isn’t a girl, she’s a woman, a wife, a mother, again, and Stanley- she’s seen this man before, in a photograph Patty carries around with her.

Beverly looks down at his arms, and feels sick to her stomach at the sight of two barely healed t-shaped scars on his inner arms.

“Thank you, Beverly,” says Stan, his voice almost inaudible.

Beverly, wakes up, gasping for air. She quickly glances at Ben sleeping next to her, and gets out of bed, running to the bathroom to throw up.

She cries, leaning against the tub, her legs numb, until her back starts to hurt and she has to stand up.

First, she checks her sons' room, calming down a bit when she sees they are both safe.

What was she dreaming about, again? Was it Stanny?

She stares at Stanny, who's clutching a cuddly toy in his tiny hands, but nothing comes to her mind. So she closes the door and makes her way to the kitchen to get a glass of water, but before she gets there, she hears Richie mumbling something in the living room.

"Richie?" Beverly whispers, slowly approaching the couch. Richie has trashed around in his sleep, and the blanket has ended up on the floor. Richie's lips are moving, but only incoherent mumbling is coming out of his mouth.

As Beverly leans down to pick up the blanket and set it over Richie again, she suddenly feels Richie grab her wrist.

"Ouch! Richie?"

Richie's eyes are only slightly open, as he looks in Beverly's direction. "Eddie?" Richie whispers.

"Edward's asleep," Beverly says, finally covering Richie with the blanket, and moving the dark curls away from his face with her fingers.

"No," Richie says, and his eyes are closed again, "No, no, *no*," he whines, moving restlessly. "Eddie!" he chokes on the word, and Beverly *knows* he doesn't mean *her* Edward.

"Shh, Richie," Beverly soothes him, still caressing his hair.

"Eddie," Richie whines and starts to sob in his sleep. He does it for a while, crying desperately while whining "Eddie" and "no". It takes minutes for him to calm down, Beverly knows this because she had stared at the clock on the wall instead of the tears streaming slowly down Richie's face. And when Richie has finally been quiet for fifteen minutes, Beverly leaves.

Ben is awake when she returns.

"Is Richie okay?" He sounds genuinely concerned. Of course he is, Richie is his friend as much as Beverly's.

"I don't think he's been okay for a long time," Beverly admits.

Suddenly Ben looks very old and sad. He sighs, deeply, then speaks, "Bev... Do you think we knew Richie at one point in our lives? Because that's the only thing that could explain this weird bond we have with him?"

Beverly wants to answer him. She really wants to open her mouth, and say, *You know, Ben, darling, you're absolutely right. I think we knew Richie, and I think at least I knew Patty's husband, and maybe that Eddie Richie keeps mentioning, too. I think there's something wrong with us, but there's nothing we can do about it.*

She doesn't say those things. She falls asleep.

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Beverly is dropping by the drugstore to get Edward's new asthma medication, when she spots William Denbrough, hand in hand with his wife.

She drops her purse, and gasps "Bill!" then immediately covers her mouth as if she'd just let a bad word slip out in front of her children.

"Can we help you?" asks William Denbrough, no, *Bill* Denbrough.

"Aren't you Beverly Rogan?" asks Audra, Bill's beautiful wife. Her eyes are starting to glimmer with excitement, but Bill looks confused.

(Haunted.)

"It's- It's actually Beverly Hanscom now," Beverly stutters out.

"Right," says Audra, "I love your work. Your dresses are beautiful," she gushes. "I love your latest collection – especially the green ones."

The green ones had all been Patricia's, but Audra didn't have to know that. "Thank you," Beverly says, but she's looking at Bill, who looks like he wants to *run*.

"Listen, Beverly, could you make something just for me? Something unique?" Audra starts to dig out something from her purse, and soon thrusts a business card into Beverly's hand. Beverly looks at the phone number in the card.

"Sure. I can make you something," Beverly says. She suddenly feels dizzy.

Audra lets out a happy sound and claps her hands. Beverly realizes she has to get Eds's medicine *now*, before she faints. She pushes past Bill, and he turns to say something to her.

"Beverly, I-"

"I need to get my son's asthma medication," says Beverly.

"I used to have a friend with asthma," Beverly hears Bill say to Audra as they are leaving.

"And you remembered just now?" answers Audra.

At home, Beverly *runs* to the bookshelf. She starts to pick out William Denbrough's books, one by one, opening them at random pages. And she sees it all – girls with red hair, boys with asthma, boys who love birds, evil clowns.

She closes the book she's holding and throws it across the room, then she takes every book and rips the pages off, throws them around until the floor is covered with them. She's glad the children are with Patty and not home, as she cries hysterically, kneeled on top of the ruined books.

That's where Ben finds her. He takes a good look at his mess of a wife, and sighs.

"I called Mike Hanlon yesterday," Ben states.

"Mike Hanlon?" Beverly says, lips wobbling. "Your old friend from

school?”

Ben kneels in front of her, and takes her hands. “Bev, I- He sent me something, I received the fax this morning. A list.”

“A list of what?”

“Names.”

“What names?”

Ben pulls the list from his pocket. “Mike, he... He doesn’t remember either. But he has notes. He doesn’t remember writing them, but he has them... Full of weird stuff.”

“Clowns,” Beverly sobs.

“And there are these names that keep popping up in his notes... Six names, and just last week he found another notebook with phone numbers...”

“What are you saying, Ben?” Beverly says, wiping the tears off her face with the sleeve of her sweater.

“Ben Hanscom and Beverly Marsh. Richie Tozier. Someone called Eddie Kaspbrak, whoever he is. And Stanley Uris. Could he be Patty’s husband? And Bill-“

“Denbrough,” Beverly finished for him, and the both glance down at the ruined books. “I saw him at the drugstore today.”

“And decided you weren’t a fan after all?” Ben says, lifting up a page from the floor.

“Ben,” Beverly says, “You don’t understand.”

“Oh, Bev,” Ben sighs. “I think I understand a little too well. I think the seven of us used to mean something. I think it’s time to bring the old gang back together.”

It's the easiest to start from Richie. One afternoon, Beverly invites him over, and after the kids have gushed over him for a while, it's time to get into serious business.

"Richie..." Beverly starts, and the words almost die in her throat. But she has to. She has to force them out.

"Richie, do you happen to know someone named Eddie Kaspbrak?"

As soon as the name leaves from Beverly's lips, Richie's face turns dark.

"Fuck you!" he spits, and Beverly is truly shocked.

"Richie!" she glances back where the kids are, hoping they didn't hear him.

"How could you do that? How do you know about Eddie? Have you been going through my stuff?"

"Richie, calm down!" Beverly tries to grab Richie's arms, but he shakes her off. "I have not disrespected your privacy, just listen to me! This is something that involves me, and you, and Ben, and Eddie."

Richie is crying. This is the second time Beverly has seen him cry. He remembers the night when Richie was having that nightmare, screaming Eddie's name, and Beverly come into realization that Eddie was something to Richie, something like Ben is to her.

Or at least he wanted it to be that way. He never got Beverly's happy ending.

"He's dead!" Richie sobs, "He's dead and *we left him down there!*" Beverly has no idea what he means, but she gathers Richie into her arms.

"I know," she whispers against Richie's hair. "I know, honey."

“He’s dead... Eddie’s dead, and Stanley... St- St- Stanley is dead too.”

“I know, honey. I know.”

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After Richie, there’s Bill.

Ben has already contacted Mike Hanlon, who’s flying across the States just to see four other people he technically doesn’t even know.

(But without Mike Hanlon, this wouldn’t be happening at all.)

Beverly stares at Audra Phillips’s business card, the phone number written in it in cursive. The only way to contact Bill is through Audra. Beverly sighs. Audra isn’t going to like this.

It’s a miracle it’s Bill who answers. “I thought I was calling Audra,” Beverly blurts out.

“It’s me,” says Bill, and Beverly smiles.

“Would you mind joining me, Ben, Richie and Mike tomorrow?”

“Who are Ben, Richie and Mike?” Bill isn’t playing with her. He genuinely doesn’t know.

“You’ll find out,” Beverly says, glancing over to see Eds and Stanny playing with Richie in the living room.

After a pause, Beverly hears Bill’s voice, “Alright. What’s your address?”

“What did Big Bill say?” Richie asks when Beverly has hung up.

“He’ll come.”

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Bill is the last to arrive.

He comes to the Hanscoms' house rain soaked, and stops to stand in the hall, staring at Beverly, and Ben, and Mike and Richie, eyes wide.

He's clutching a small book in his hand.

"What do you got there, Billy?" Richie is the first to speak.

"I've had this thing for ages, never got rid off it. I don't know how it ended up to me." Bill hands the book over to Beverly, and all five turn to look at it.

It's a book about birds. Mike takes the book from Beverly's shaking hands, and opens it.

Stanley Uris, it says, in thirteen-year-old Stan's handwriting.

"Oh," says Ben.

Richie wipes away a stray tear, and looks at Bill with a smile. "Welcome back to the Losers' Club, Big Bill. What a loser you turned out to be!"

"Beep beep, Richie," they all say in unison.

Author's Note:

thanks for reading.